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## Developing Collaborative Skills in Piano Students

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# Developing Collaborative Skills in Piano Students

Linxi Yang

A Doctoral Research Project submitted  
to the College of Creative Arts  
at West Virginia University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts in  
Collaborative Piano

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School of Music

Morgantown, West Virginia  
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Keywords: collaborative pianist, accompanying, accompanist  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Developing Collaborative Skills in Piano Students**

Linxi Yang

This research paper explores how to develop collaborative skills in piano students at the college level. It offers a brief history of collaborative study and performance, describes the specifics of working with singers and instrumentalists in duo, chamber and large ensemble repertoire, and includes musical examples and selected resources. This paper is intended to enrich the activities of teachers and collaborative pianists through the description and application of specific skills and to provide pathways for effective professional collaborations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I also express my gratitude to my doctoral committee members, Dr. Peter Amstutz, Dr. Mitchell Arnold, and Professor General Hambrick, for their time and investment in me over the past three years. I have learned so much from each of you and appreciate your caring so deeply about your student.

For my mother, who has been my biggest support from day one, I feel incredible gratitude from the bottom of my heart: for her love, time, listening, advice and unwavering belief that I could do whatever I set my mind to, even when I did not believe it myself. In addition, I also want to give special gratitude to my father whose remembrance is eternal.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Collaborative piano programs are focused on a practical performing arts discipline that have gradually become popular in recent years. These programs help performers use musical language to reveal the profound and vast inner world of the composer by communicating together. However, a practical problem exists that although the number of people studying the piano abounds, most of the necessary collaborative skills are ignored and hence lacking in many pianists today. Many people think that the solo pianist is the irreplaceable king of the stage and the most noticeable star. In contrast, collaborative pianists are optional and can easily be replaced. Further, the collaborative pianist is often downgraded with many not aware of the basic concept and artistic value of the piano as a duo or ensemble instrument.

As Martin Katz wrote in his book *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner*, “If you experience no particular pride or excitement when accompanying someone, or if failure as a soloist has led you to try this field, then think again, collaborative piano is surely not your ‘thing’.”<sup>1</sup> English composer and accompanist Philip Cranmer (1918-2006) proposed in his book *The Technique of Accompaniment*: “most accompanists are too retiring and self-effacing, and these characteristics show themselves in modest and obsequious playing. The greater part of our work, however, both with singers and instrumentalists, requires us to be equal partners.”<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Katz. *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 279.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Cranmer. *The Technique of Accompaniment*. (London: Dennis Dobson, 1970), 8.



best collaborative pianists wholeheartedly put themselves with others during the collaborative performance, use the exquisite sounds and range of the piano while playing together, and give musical and spiritual support and encouragement for their collaborators; these are the gifted, successful collaborative pianists.

However, what are the most important qualities of a qualified collaborative pianist? Is it enough to perform respectably and devote the whole heart and soul to this subject? Having a mastery of a wide variety collaborative skills is the essence of becoming an excellent collaborative pianist. This research paper provides a series of arguments centered on developing essential collaborative skills in piano students. After a brief history of the collaborative piano major and a description of the current situation, three major aspects of developing collaborative skills are discussed: the first is the characteristics and skills required for successful collaboration; the second is describing the specifics of working with singers and instrumentalists categorized by strings, woodwinds, brass, chamber ensemble, orchestra, and pianists; and the third area is the analysis of selected works as examples of performance practice and collaboration. The appendix includes a listing of selected resources helpful for the student and teacher.

### **The Definition of Collaborative Piano**

In terms of etymology, “collaboration” originated from the French “collaboration” which literally means “working with.” From the Latin word structure, it can be broken down into two parts, *con-* (“with”) and *labōrō* (“work”). Morphologically *collaborate* and *-ion*.<sup>3</sup>

“Collaborative” as an adjective means: “involving two or more people working together for a

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<sup>3</sup> “Collaboration”, in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

special purpose.”<sup>4</sup> In the interpretation of this vocabulary meaning, the number, method and purpose of "collaboration" is identified. Therefore, one can simply define the discipline as follows: “collaborative piano is a term used to denote a field of the piano profession where a pianist works in collaboration with one or more instrumentalists, singers, dancers, or other artists.”<sup>5</sup> Further, the term collaborative piano was used by the pianist Samuel Sanders (1937-1999), a professor at Julliard and Peabody Conservatory, to describe performance with vocalists, and instrumentalists, and in other art forms. Sanders is often credited with being the first to use this term.

The above definitions of collaborative piano are detailed, but still lacking in precision. Firstly, it appears that the first person to propose this term was not Samuel Sanders. It is mentioned in a *New York Times* concert review by Joseph Horowitz in 1978:

“The program also included the Debussy sonata and Brahms’s Trio in B (Op. 8). Albert Lotto was the strong, richly collaborative pianist in the Beethoven and Brahms works, and Carol Stein Amado was the capable violinist.”<sup>6</sup>

Jeremy Dibble also recounted the words of early-20th century British conductor and piano accompanist Herbert Hamilton Harty (1879-1941) who said in his 1930 autobiography:

‘The chief cause for the neglect of the art of accompaniment is to be found in the absurd and unfortunate title of ‘Accompanist’, with all that it implies. Whatever may have been the justification for this name in the darkest early Victorian ages, it is now nothing but a stupid and misleading misnomer for a musician who is called upon to exhibit very rare and special qualities. “Collaborator” would be more explanatory and a much more desirable.

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<sup>4</sup> “Collaborative”, in Cambridge online Dictionary of the English Language, Cambridge University Press, Feb.22,2023. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/collaborative>

<sup>5</sup> What is Collaborative Piano?” The Collaborative Piano Blog, last modified November 7, 2005, accessed February 28, 2022,<https://collaborativepiano.blogspot.com/2005/11/what-is-collaborative-piano.html>.

<sup>6</sup> “The Origin of the Term “Collaborative Pianist” Might Not Be What You Think It Is,” The Collaborative Piano Blog, last modified March 20, 2007, accessed by February 29,2022, <https://collaborativepiano.blogspot.com/2017/03/the-origin-of-term-collaborative.html#.WNEwTvgZOCQ>.

description...”<sup>7</sup>

Samuel Sanders is credited with equalizing the collaborative pianist in programs and promotional materials having his name appear along with the main soloists; he also advocated for women to enter the field.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, the scope of the discipline of collaborative piano is not just cooperating with solo artists. There are also many opportunities to perform with chamber ensemble or in the orchestra.

In summary, the definition of collaborative piano may be best expressed as a term used to denote an area of the piano profession where a pianist is dedicated to the art of working collaboratively with other musicians or groups, including vocalists, instrumentalists, and small and large ensembles.

### **A brief history of collaborative piano**

The use of a keyboard instrument in combination with other instrumentalists or singers has a long history. The trio sonata developed by composers such as Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713) was typically comprised of two strings and continuo. The continuo involved a partially improvised accompaniment in which the keyboard player would be given the bass line and the harmonic progression to create a musical foundation for singers, instrumentalists or small ensemble. The improvisational skill based on figured bass was a necessary ability for the keyboard player at that time. In the field of instrumental music beginning at the end of the 17th century, the sonata became an important genre featuring contrasts in timbre and registers during

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<sup>7</sup> Dibble, Jeremy. *Hamilton Harty: Musical Polymath*. Vol. 9. Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2013, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Xiang Wei. “The Development and Dissemination of the Collaborative Piano Program from the United States to China.” (DMA diss, North Dakota State University, 2021) 3-4.

the Baroque period. The Sonata in B minor for violin and harpsichord, BWV1014 by J.S. Bach (1685-1750) is often considered the first duo sonata.<sup>9</sup> Instead of providing only figured bass, Bach wrote out the keyboard part for the majority of the sonata.

In 1700, Italian instrument maker Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655-1731) created the “gravicembalo col pian e fort” (the harpsichord with soft and loud), a new keyboard instrument capable of dynamic differences that would eventually become the fortepiano and the piano of today. Cristofori’s instrument inspired other instrument makers, and these early pianos rapidly spread throughout Europe and quickly became the most popular musical instrument in high society.<sup>10</sup> With the continuous improvements of the fortepiano, the instrument became capable of a rich legato sound and different dynamics and had a direct impact on the keyboard part of ensemble writing. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, chamber works with keyboard flourished. Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) wrote 45 trios with keyboard, which are typically characterized by the piano being the dominant musical instrument and supported by the violin and cello, as well as songs for voice and keyboard. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) created a large body of collaborative works with fortepiano including piano trios, piano quartets, piano duets, two-piano works, sonatas for piano and violin as well as songs for voice and piano. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) developed the collaborative repertoire further composing the first song cycle and numerous sonatas for piano and violin, piano and cello, and several different chamber works.

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<sup>9</sup> Timothy Judd, Bach’s Sonata No. 1 in B Minor for Violin and Harpsichord, BWV 1014: “A Conversation Among Equals,” The Listener’s Club, accessed by March 2, 2023, <https://thelistenersclub.com/2022/10/10/bachs-sonata-no-1-in-b-minor-for-violin-and-harpsichord-bwv-1014-a-conversation-among-equals/>

<sup>10</sup> First piano, *The Generalist Academy*. accessed by March 3, 2023, <https://generalist.academy/2022/02/23/first-piano/>

In the early to mid -19<sup>th</sup> century, the piano in chamber works and art songs rose to an equal position. Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) and others made numerous contributions to the development of art songs and duo repertoire. In art songs the piano not only provides harmony and rhythm, but also depicts details of the texts, emotions, and atmosphere. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new type of family concert, *Hausmusik*, developed in Europe. This music-making occurred in a private house or at private social gatherings where the pianist collaborated in intimate ensembles. This form of salon or small concert also became the main medium to promote the development and spread of art songs and chamber works and the pianist as accompanist.

Into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, whether in an evening of charming and romantic art song, or in the salon of elegant chamber music, or on concert stages around the world, thousands of piano accompanists have used their musical prowess to make countless collaborations with various musicians.

One event marks a new stage for the piano accompanying profession which would later serve to inspire respect and academic recognition by universities and conservatories internationally: the first bachelor's degree in accompanying offered at the University of Southern California in 1947 established by Gwendolyn Kodolfsky (1906-1998). A doctorate was later added in 1972. Other prominent schools in America such Juilliard, University of Michigan, University of Illinois, and the Eastman School of Music would follow by adding accompanying programs.<sup>11</sup>

British pianist Gerald Moore (1899-1987) provided many brilliant speeches and lectures in television, broadcasting, and universities as a prominent accompanist. He improved the status

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Masters. "Presiding at the Pianoforte: A Brief History of Accompanying," *American Music Teacher* 60, no.4 (February/March 2011): 16-21.

of the accompanist and promoted the in-depth development of the collaborative piano discipline. He once said: "I like partnerships. So let the solo have the thrill and the glory of playing a lone hand. I shall continue, I hope, to get my musical thrill from 'collaborations' and from the joys that come from perfect teamwork."<sup>12</sup>

The term "collaborative piano" has seen use even outside of North America, including some countries in Asia. In Korea, for example, Hun Won Yim began to teach collaborative piano in undergraduate classes at Hanyang University in 1979, and then established the first master's degree and a doctoral program in collaborative piano in 1994 and 2008. Currently, there are 16 Korean universities that offer collaborative piano degrees.<sup>13</sup>

Collaborative piano in China has been showing a prominent trend in recent years. The Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing began offering a master's degree in collaborative piano in 2009 and established a doctoral degree in collaborative piano and opera coaching in 2018. Sichuan Conservatory of Music offers a bachelor's degree in collaborative piano. Other conservatories in China, such as the Chinese Conservatory of Music in Beijing, Shanghai Conservatory, and Tianjin Juilliard offer a master's degree in collaborative piano.

In terms of the development of collaborative piano professionalism around the world, the prospects of this profession are broad, and the employment demand is large. However, there are problems such as the unbalanced development of Eastern and Western countries, the lack of professional resources for teachers, and irregular curriculums.

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<sup>12</sup> Gerald Moore, *The Unashamed Accompanist*. (London: Methuen & Co. 1959) 7.

<sup>13</sup>Lee, Ji Yeon. "Contemporary Collaborative Piano Practices in Korea: Five Case Studies." (DMA diss., West Virginia University, 2019:7).

### **Purpose of the study**

Collaborative piano has existed as a college major in the United States only since the second half of the 20th century, compared to other mainstream piano degrees that have been in existence for an entire century prior. Because of its status as a relative newcomer to the university curriculum, only a handful of books and dissertations have been written on the subject. With the growing interest and desire for musical students to specialize in this area, the prospects in the professional employment market have become more and more broad. As such, students need scholarly information regarding both the theoretical and practical aspects of collaborative piano. This project aims to provide theoretical and practical information and will thus be a resource for students, teachers and scholars as an important documentation of today's practices.

Secondly, the need for this study is that many people equate piano accompaniment with the collaborative piano major and are not aware of the goals and directions for developing the different skills very clearly. As a result, the collaborative pianist's skills are often not fully cultivated, and the advantages of different talents are not being exploited. The purpose of this research paper is to summarize the characteristics and content of collaborative piano skills so as to distinguish and develop them more easily.

The collaborative pianist on the stage is not subordinate to other players, but an integral part of the performance. Due to the strong market demand, the abilities needed by the collaborative pianist are unprecedentedly becoming more known and enlarged. The intent of this research paper is to stimulate analytical thinking and an ensemble-oriented focus to further develop the collaborative pianist's training.

### **Review of related literature**

In the past three decades, many music schools and conservatories in the United States have been offering the collaborative piano major. Although research on aspects of collaborative piano is not as predominant as those of solo piano performance, it is much richer today than in the previous century. In recent years, a number of collaborative piano professionals and piano educators have published monographs or papers on how to develop collaborative skills in piano students. For example, some of the recent dissertations include: “An Annotated Survey of Reference Material Available to the Collaborative Pianist”<sup>14</sup>; “More Than the Mere Notes: Incorporating Analytical Skills into the Collaborative Pianist’s Process in Learning, Rehearsing, and Performing Repertoire”<sup>15</sup>; “Interpersonal Aspects of Musical Collaboration for Collaborative Pianists”<sup>16</sup>; and “Unusual Soundscapes: Chamber Ensembles of the Twentieth Century and Beyond Involving the Collaborative Pianist”<sup>17</sup>.

There are also theoretical books and magazine articles focused on collaborative skills as well as syllabi for teaching collaborative piano, such as the 2008 published article in *American Music Teacher* by Janice Wenger, “Passion for Collaboration”<sup>18</sup> and the 2018 publication by Nanyi Qiang, *Ten Course Syllabi for Teaching Collaborative Piano Courses*.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Hae Sook Rhee published *The Art of Instrumental Accompanying: A Practical Guide for the Collaborative Pianist*<sup>20</sup> in 2012.

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<sup>14</sup> Glennon, Maura Jeanne. “An Annotated Survey of Reference Material Available to the Collaborative Pianist.” (DMA diss, The Florida State University, 1998)

<sup>15</sup> Pow, Lauralie Bell. “More Than the Mere Notes”: Incorporating Analytical Skills into the Collaborative Pianist’s Process in Learning, Rehearsing, and Performing Repertoire.” (DMA diss, University of Miami, 2016)

<sup>16</sup> Cota, Mary. “Interpersonal Aspects of Musical Collaboration for Collaborative Pianists.” (DMA diss Arizona State University, 2019)

<sup>17</sup> Gligic Milena. “Unusual Soundscapes: Chamber Ensembles of the Twentieth Century and Beyond Involving the Collaborative Pianist.” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Wenger, Janice. “Passion for Collaboration.” *The American Music Teacher* 57, no. 4 (2008): 30

<sup>19</sup> Qiang, Nanyi. *Ten Course Syllabi for Teaching Collaborative Piano Courses*. Beau Bassin, Mauritius: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Rhee, Haesook. *The Art of Instrumental Accompanying: A Practical Guide for the Collaborative Pianist*. New York, NY: Carl Fischer, 2012.



There are several books written by concert pianists who specialize in collaborative playing: *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner*<sup>21</sup> by Martin Katz; *The Art of Accompanying and Coaching*<sup>22</sup> by Kurt Adler; and *The Unashamed Accompanist*<sup>23</sup> by Gerald Moore. These books provide a variety of helpful guidelines for accompaniment and basic requirements for collaborative piano students.

This research paper has also benefited from the many published interviews with collaborative pianists found in a variety of U.S. and international publications and videos. One significant interview was given by one of the most influential living collaborative pianists, Martin Katz.<sup>24</sup> Other important resources include printed interviews with Gerald Moore published in *American Music Teacher*<sup>25</sup> and an interview with Iain Burnside from *The Cross-Eyed Pianist*.<sup>26</sup> These vivid resources reveal some of the views of European and American artists on cultivating collaborative talents.

As the birthplace of the discipline, most of the collaborative piano courses in Western countries are based on the works of representative composers in Western music history. There is a rich repertoire, and the discipline of collaboration is relatively systematic (including coaching, art songs, diction, chamber works, sonata literature, etc.). In recent years, collaborative piano majors in higher education in Asia have developed very quickly, not only because there are now many international students who have studied collaborative piano in Europe and the United

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<sup>21</sup> Martin Katz, *The Complete Collaborator: The Pianist as Partner*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Adler, Kurt. *The Art of Accompanying and Coaching*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965.

<sup>23</sup> Moore, Gerald. *The Unashamed Accompanist*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1944.

<sup>24</sup> iCadenza. "iCadenza interview with Martin Katz, parts 1 and 2." YouTube.

<sup>25</sup> Demarest, Alison, and Gerald Moore. "Gerald Moore." *American Music Teacher* 14, no. 2 (1964): 28-29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43536837> (accessed March 8, 2019).

<sup>26</sup> "Meet the Artist – Iain Burnside, pianist. *The Cross-Eyed Pianist*. <https://crosseyedpianist.com/2018/03/08/meet-the-artist-iain-burnside-pianist/> (accessed on March 8, 2019).

States, but also because the collaborative pianists have returned to their countries to create their own careers. These pianists pay increased attention to the cultivation of the spirit of collaboration and provide examples of the awareness of the cooperation between piano and other musical instruments as an important part of musical achievement. In addition, collaboration with piano also promotes the enjoyment and value of performance, greatly increasing the benefit for both performers and audience.

Although most of the curricular systems and training methods in Japan, South Korea, and China are drawn from European and American countries, they all have their own characteristics. For example, music schools in China require improvisation skills to create accompaniments by the collaborative pianist due to the strong cultural tradition of Chinese folk songs that feature only a single melody and ancient poetry found in daily education.

The increasing number of collaborative piano students in general displays that Asian students have a great interest in this field. A broad spectrum of coursework, performance classes, master classes and private instruction in music schools and conservatories are combined with opportunities for skill building through entrepreneurship and cross-disciplinary activities. However, in Asia, the academic research on cultivating collaborative skills is still very limited. Many people do not understand completely about the concept of collaboration and the significance and value of this musical cooperation. There are a few papers and books on how to cultivate students' improvisation ability for folk song accompaniments. For example: “The Role of the Collaborative Piano in Chinese Ethnic Vocal Music”<sup>27</sup>; “Collaboration: The Relationship and Importance of Piano Accompaniment and Singing”<sup>28</sup>; “Discussion of the Performance of the

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<sup>27</sup> Yao Chen. “The Role of the Collaborative Piano in Chinese Ethnic Vocal Music.” *Sichuan Drama*, 2020, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ni Qian. “Collaboration—the Relationship and Importance of Piano Accompaniment and Singing.” *Popular Literature*, 2012.

Piano Trio and the Improvement of Collaboration Awareness”<sup>29</sup>; “Collaborative Piano Research on the Actual Status of Teaching in Private Universities.”<sup>30</sup>; and *Generalities of Piano Accompaniment Teaching*.<sup>31</sup> However, the technique of collaborative piano with systematic and independent research on vocal and instrumental music is not found in these resources. Therefore, this research paper is intended to be particularly applicable for Chinese piano students and teachers for developing collaborative skills.

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<sup>29</sup> Jieqiong,Zhang. “Discussion of the Performance of the Piano Trio and the Improvement of Collaboration Awareness”, *Art Life*, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Rui Wang. “Collaborative Piano Research on the Actual Status of Teaching in Private Universities”, *Charming China*, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> WenJun Wang. *Generalities in Piano Accompaniment Teaching*, XiNan Normal University Press, 2014.

## CHAPTER II

### DESCRIPTION OF COLLABORATIVE SKILLS

“The ensemble pianist or the accompanist or the man ‘at the piano’ – to be first rate at his job does not need to be a superman. He does need to be a good pianist, he does need sensitive ears, and he does need a sensitive musical brain. Strangely enough, too, he does need in his chemical makeup, that repository of all human feeling, that source of poetry, fire, and romance, namely, a heart.”<sup>32</sup> – Gerald Moore

Collaborative pianists require many professional skills and abilities: artistic piano technique, good musical interpretative ability, strong listening abilities, knowledge of vocal and instrumental techniques, and a cooperative and kind personality, to name a few. This chapter focuses on the general characteristics of collaborative skills required for pianists. Since the role of the piano accompaniment can no longer be considered auxiliary in music collaboration, the collaborative pianist must have a vast knowledge to thoroughly understand the instrument and musical works to be studied and performed. Professional collaborative performance skills require a spirit of partnership to achieve a common understanding and connection with the music, thereby achieving a more comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of the works performed.

Dian Baker’s doctoral paper, “A Resource Manual for the Collaborative Pianist: Twenty Class Syllabi for Teaching Collaborative Piano Skills and an Annotated Bibliography,” has identified sixteen competencies necessary for collaborative pianists.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Moore, Gerald. *Am I Too Loud? Memoirs of an Accompanist*. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962), 101.

<sup>33</sup> Dian Baker, “A Resource Manual for the Collaborative Pianist: Twenty Class Syllabi for Teaching Collaborative Piano Skills and an Annotated Bibliography” (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2006), 3-4.

1. Sightreading and score reading
2. Transposition and clef reading
3. Continuo and figured bass realization
4. Instrumental collaboration and ensemble/rehearsal techniques
5. Orchestral reduction and transcription
6. Recital program-building
7. Career issues, auditions, competitions
8. Style, interpretation, and performance practice
9. Effective piano preparation and practice
10. Functional pianistic technique
11. Cultural, historical, and aesthetic aspects
12. Song translation, lyric diction, International Phonetic Alphabet
13. Vocal collaboration
14. Educational materials and research
15. Collaborative listening and the psychology of collaboration
16. Repertoire development and maintenance

This is an interesting list that presents several general and useful ideas. Some abilities such as continuo and figured bass realizations are debatable. Other abilities such as time management or traits such as reliability and effective personal communication can be explored further.

Chris Foley in his collaborative piano blog includes a very detailed list of “Required and Preferred Skills for the Collaborative Pianist.” He uses seven categories: professionalism, pianistic skills, skills for vocal collaboration, skills for instrumental collaboration, personal skills, and other specific skills for dance accompanist and opera coach/repetiteur. Foley uses stars to express the level of need. Three stars are the essential skills, two stars are preferred skills, one star is non-essential but a definite plus. For example, Foley lists:

## **Pianistic Skills<sup>34</sup>**

- \*\*\* Ability to play at a consistently high level
- \*\*\* Ability to learn music accurately
- \*\*\* Ability to learn music quickly
- \*\* Ability to improve quality of playing in the lead-up to a recital
- \*\*\* Ability to read solo line(s) in addition to piano part
- \*\*\* Ability to sight-read at a level close to that of prepared material
- \*\* Ability to sight-read at the same level as that of prepared material
- \*\* Ability to sing solo lines in addition to playing piano part
- \*\* Ability to read orchestral scores
- \*\* Ability to read figured bass
- \*\* Ability to transpose music after some preparation
- \* Ability to transpose at sight
- \* New opera: ability to sight-read, singing vocal lines at sight
- \* New opera: ability to sight-read from orchestral score
- \*\*\* Ability to play selected solo material at a high level

The following are the author's list of the necessary general skills for collaborative pianists along with descriptions.

### **1. Artistic piano playing skills**

An excellent collaborative pianist requires the same pianistic skills as a solo pianist, such as the use of good fingering, dynamics, articulation, balance between and within the hands, and control of the pedals. Velocity in a variety of basic patterns, such as scales, arpeggios, trills, and octaves is also required.

### **2. Sight-reading ability**

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<sup>34</sup> Chris Foley, "Required and Preferred Skills for the Collaborative Pianist", The Collaborative Piano Blog, accessed March 4, 2023. <https://collaborativepiano.blogspot.com/search?q=Required+and+Preferred+Skills>

Keyboardists should have the ability to play accurately at sight music with a variety of textures and to quickly recognize musical patterns and harmonic structures, and simultaneously play musically and with expression.

### **3. Listening ability**

The collaborative pianist must be able to listen to all the performers on the stage. Keen listening is one of the most important traits of the collaborative performer, and along with that, the ability to quickly react on the piano to what is heard. An excellent collaborative pianist not only listens to balance, tone colors, fluctuations of the musical line and dynamics, but also is able to anticipate what the other performers will do musically.

### **4. Strong rhythm**

Excellent rhythm demands not just stable rhythm but also flexibility and character where it is required. Collaborative pianists must solidly feel the rhythm in their bodies according to the nature of the works and the different kinds of meters and patterns.

### **5. Knowledge of instruments and the basics of instrumental and vocal techniques**

A basic understanding of the nature, limitations, range, and sound production of different instruments and voice types is beneficial for professional collaborations.

### **6. Musicality**

The nuance, dynamics, emotions, and character of the music must be manifested through a musical performer, otherwise the performance will be empty, rigid, and lifeless. Music is a language and must be expressed as such for effective performance.

### **7. Efficient practice skills**

Collaborative pianists regularly face a large number of challenges that need to be quickly mastered. Efficient practice methods are a necessity to solve problems, internalize the music, and meet deadlines.

### **8. Cooperative and flexible personality**

Collaborative performance is teamwork that requires everyone to get along musically and personally. A flexible personality refers to a friendly attitude, patience, good communication skills and the ability to be at ease with participants and the many unexpected situations that typically happen.

### **9. Responsible character**

The sense of responsibility here has several meanings. On the one hand, in the process of teamwork, there must be a sense of mission, sincerity, and the ability to achieve goals as required and planned to promote the completion of the musical tasks and obligations. On the other hand, it refers to expressing a sense of responsibility to society with music, helping the audience to care and understand the music, and convey a positive outlook on life and values.

### **10. Read multiple clefs fluently**

Collaborative pianists should be able to read fluently all clefs (treble, bass, c, and f clefs) for transposition and score reading.

### **11. Organized**

Collaborative pianists must be organized, methodical, prepared, and punctual for all practice, rehearsals, and performances. They must know how to manage time and know their own capabilities.

### **12. Internalize music quickly**



It is not enough to be able to sight-read easily or learn the notes quickly. Pianists must be able to internalize the music quickly: to feel the music, the character, the emotions, and the style so as to provide a polished, secure, musically satisfying performance, within the often quick deadlines and limited rehearsal time demanded by the profession.

### **13. Stage presence**

The ability here refers to the full range of musical presentation: dress, posture, and professional demeanor, as well as the enjoyment of bringing beautiful music to the audience. Pianists may need the ability to adjust their mentality and focus to prevent tension or distractions from affecting their stage presence.

### **14. Punctuality**

Rehearsal and performance often involve many people; thus, punctuality is a prerequisite for music activities to be successfully carried out.

### **15. Language ability**

Working knowledge of foreign languages is beneficial for collaborating with singers, working internationally, and with a variety of instrumentalists and repertoire.

### **16. Knowledge of diction**

Collaborative pianists should be able to read and write the International Phonetic Alphabet. This skill can provide detailed pronunciation instructions for the singers and help them master foreign sounds more quickly. It also helps in understanding musical phrasing and inflection when knowing correct pronunciations.

### **17. Knowledge of a wide repertoire of instrumental music, art songs, and operas**

Pianists must know information about composers, works, texts, and musical eras and styles.

## **18. Transposition skills**

This is useful for reading clefs, collaborating with non-C instruments, and assisting singers with their vocal range abilities.

## **19. Improvisational skills**

This skill has a variety of uses: in recitative accompanying, creating accompaniments for melodies (such as for Chinese traditional melodies) or reading lead sheets and figured basses. It is also useful for improvising at the appropriate fermatas in classical works.

## **20. Ornamentation skills**

Similar to improvising, this includes understanding the traditional uses of ornaments in the different periods of music as well as helping singers or instrumentalists to ornament in Baroque works. Successful ornamentation requires artistic taste gained from listening to highly regarded musicians and reading musical treatises of the various eras.

The following chapters explore the application of many of these characteristics in more detail.

## CHAPTER III

### COLLABORATION WITH SINGERS AND INSTRUMENTALISTS

This chapter explores selected collaborative skills needed to work with singers, strings, winds, brass, chamber music, orchestra, and other pianists. Each section focuses on the different specific collaborative skills required when the pianist cooperates with vocal or instrumental musicians.

#### Working with Singers

“The accompaniment to every good song paints a picture or evokes a mood which is inspired by the words. The composer did not write the vocal line first and then fill in the piano part afterwards.”<sup>35</sup> – Gerald Moore

Firstly, the pianist must have knowledge of the lyrics, as well as an understanding of the meaning and background of the texts. These should be studied in advance of learning the music by the pianist. There are several books, websites, and other resources that offer song text translations. Some of the most helpful books are: *Translating Song: Lyrics and Texts* by Peter Low; *A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* by Carol Kimball; *Singing in French: A Manual of French Diction and French Vocal Repertoire* by Thomas Grubb; and *The Interpretation of French Song* by Pierre Bernac, to name a few. In addition, there are two useful online resources: [lyricstranslate.com](http://lyricstranslate.com) and [lieder.net](http://lieder.net). These two free international lyric-translation websites provide general translation resources in many languages. This knowledge helps to guide the vocalist’s diction, pronunciation and expression of the words. More importantly, the pianist can depict a three-dimensional picture for the singer through the emotion, tone color, and phrase shape,

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<sup>35</sup> Moore, Gerald. *The Unashamed Accompanist*. (London: Methuen & Co., 1959), 9.

which can increase the musical imagination. Thus, pianists can better help singers interpret the music and provide a knowledgeable interpretation for the piano accompaniment.

Secondly, the pianist should help the singer interpret the song according to such singing habits as breathing, attention to range, and voice limitation. The rhythm is the backbone of the entire song. Grasping the inflection of the words and phrasing can make the rhythm stable. But the rhythm should typically not be completely rigid. For example, with a long note in the vocal line, the pianist must control the rhythm based on the limits of the singer's technique. As for rubato, the pianist must consider the dynamics, the mood, the tone of the singer, and the singer's breath support.

Thirdly, the pianist must be sensitive to the balance, and that the volume of the piano does not cover the singer. Having an equal role does not mean that the volume of the pianist and vocalist is competing or equal. The pianist should know how to follow, to accompany, and to play with a variety of tone. For example, if a soprano is singing in the lower part of the voice, the pianist must be careful not to cover the singer, despite what the dynamics in the music may say. Also, for collaborating with singers in a concert, the grand piano lid is typically on half stick instead of full stick to assist in balancing the sound.

Furthermore, the pianist must carefully work the pedals. Gerald Moore said in his book *Am I too Loud*: "The shaping of a phrase, a sure test of a pianist's musical grammar or musical good manners, is founded largely on technique. Obviously under the same heading comes pedaling; the pedal is the pianist's best friend."<sup>36</sup> As a good partner of a singer, the pianist needs to use the damper pedal cleanly and colorfully. Pianists can also make effective use of the soft

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<sup>36</sup> Moore, Gerald. *Am I Too Loud: Memoirs of an Accompanist*. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), 200.

pedal to lighten some textures, so that the singer does not have to compete with the sound of the piano. Quick uses of the soft pedal (*una corda*) is also helpful with phrasing, nuance, and matching the inflection of the words.

Fifthly, the pianist must have knowledge of pronunciation and how to play in time with the singer. For the singer, the vowel is on the beat which is where the pianist and singer align. The consonants happen before the beat. The pianist should help the singer to be aware of the placement of the consonants and to assist with helping the clear pronunciation and alignment of the music. As a result, the pianist should listen carefully for patterns in vowel and consonant sounds and adjust the tempo as needed.

. Last but not least, the pianist must master a variety of styles and maintain a certain amount of arias, art songs, and folk songs as a standard repertoire for an experienced collaborative pianist.

The category of working with singers does not only include solo singers, but also duets, small ensemble, and choral works. The requirements above apply to a variety of vocal partnerships.

### **Working with String Players**

The string family consists of violin, viola, cello, and double bass. Some of the most common collaborative combinations that pianists partake in are with string performers, particularly violinists. Each instrument of the string family has its own characteristics. There is a large repertoire of string music with piano which includes sonatas, variations, and fantasies.

Piano students should have a basic knowledge of string technique. For instance, watching for physical movements such as bow changes, and matching sounds when string players use *pizzicato* (plucking of the strings with the fingers). Furthermore, knowledge of some of the extended techniques string players use such as harmonics is also helpful. String players often have a change of timbre with the different techniques they require more *leggiero* (lightness) from the pianist.

Another important point of collaboration with strings is the position of the piano and the string player on stage or in any performance space. Setting up a reasonable distance between the piano and the string player must be done without compromising their line of sight and also be sensitive to the acoustics and projection of the instruments. The position of the higher-voiced string instruments (viola and violin) is best suited to the immediate right of a pianist (stage left) where their F-holes face the audience to maximize sound projection.

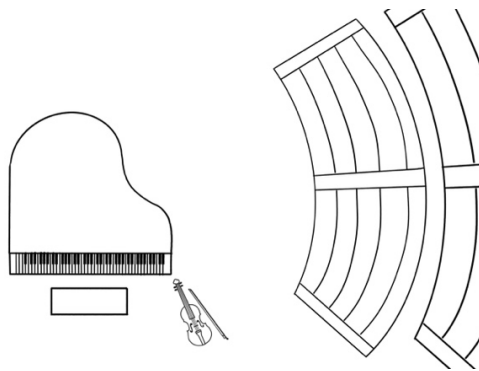


Figure 3.1: The position of piano and violin in recital, designed by Zi Jing Wu

This position may also be used for cello and string bass players:

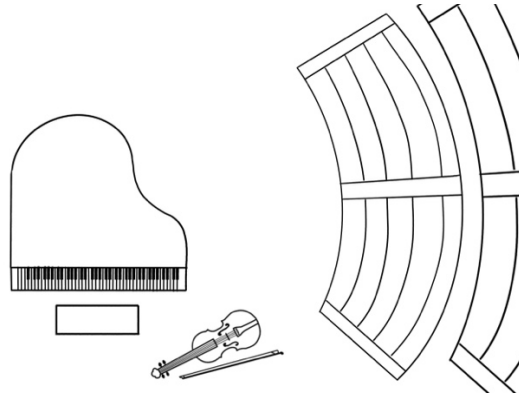


Figure 3.2: Position of piano and cello in recital, designed by Zi Jing Wu

It is, however, common to find string players in different arrangements, namely cellists facing the audience or slightly stage right, near the curve of the piano. This position may also be used for double bass.

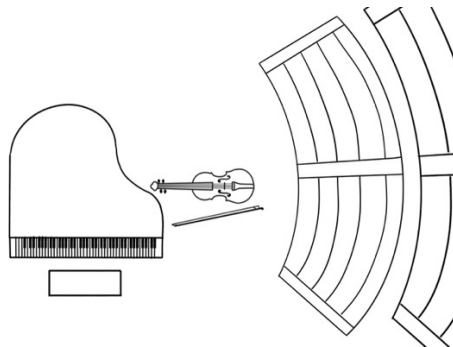


Figure 3.3: The second position of piano and cello in recital, designed by Zi Jing Wu

The piano lid will also need to be adjusted according to the size of the concert space and the sound of the instruments. As always, the principle remains that pianists should pay attention to the balance and develop acute listening to blend with their collaborators.

### **Working with Wind Players**

Woodwind instruments such as flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, and saxophone offer a wide range of sound for the collaborative pianist to enjoy. In general, the piano can show its marvelous range of sounds when cooperating with winds. In addition, because the piano is a fixed-pitch instrument, the absolutely precise intonation helps woodwinds to find accuracy in their sound and develop their unique blending with the piano. Pianists should focus on the following points when working with winds:

Most importantly, the pianist must pay careful attention to the wind player's breathing. In particular, the pianist should pay attention to the length of the phrases and confirm where the player will breathe and what cues will be needed. Being sensitive to this will help to form a good working relationship. Moreover, the double reed (oboe and bassoon) and single reed (clarinet and saxophone) instruments are different. Compared with other wind instruments, double reed instruments such as oboe and bassoon require fast transformation of exhalation and tongue changes. In the process of collaboration, pianists must understand that the lip and tongue muscles of wind players are not like pianists' fingers which can continue to move almost tirelessly. Wind players need time to rest and achieve appropriate relaxation. For that reason, when playing concertos with winds, it is important to learn and play the orchestral interludes to allow the soloists to rest. It is also important for pianists to understand the ranges of the wind family instruments, including the various clarinets and saxophones. The pianist will be able to use transposition skills with reading the Eb alto saxophone and the Bb clarinet lines, for example.

For the most part, balance with the piano opened on full stick is not an issue and helps support the soloist. For single reed instruments, such as the clarinet, "the dramatic soprano" of the winds family, the tone is relatively high, piercing, and warm, and can benefit from the pianist



playing with a full range of sound. On the other hand, performing with flute can typically require the piano lid to be on half stick, with the pianist being careful not to cover when the flutist is playing in the lower register.

### **Working with Brass Players**

In the large brass family, the more frequent instruments that pianists usually collaborate with include trumpet, trombone, French horn, and tuba. Each of these instruments presents its own unique color and sound as it blends with the broad range of the piano. These instruments can be very complementary to the sound of the piano. As with the clarinet and saxophone, the trumpet in Bb and the horn in F will require the pianist to transpose. Understanding transposition is conducive to smooth communication with brass players of transposing instruments.

Intonation is often a main issue during collaborative rehearsals with brass instruments. For example, the trumpet is not tuned to equal temperament because of its reliance on overtones to get the open notes, but the piano is tuned to equal temperament with fixed intonation.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, the intonation of tones can be influenced to some degree by the lips and embouchure of the player or different length of the valve. The pianist needs to understand the working principles and tuning rules of the trumpet and listen keenly to help support the player.

Brass instruments are of many shapes and sizes. The different vibrations of brass instruments with different tonalities leads to different sound transmission speeds. Brass players

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<sup>37</sup> Sanders, Anthony Richard, "A Methodology and Overview of Key Collaborations: A Duo Practice Method for Trumpet and Piano" (DMA diss., The University of North Carolina, 2021:2-3).

need to arrange accurately specific places to breathe. They often have a certain regularity in such places and are careful not to affect the integrity of the phrase. Brass players also have some unique techniques that pianists must accommodate such as inserting or removing a mute or allowing them appropriate time to perform some special technique such as buzzing or tonguing.

### **Working in Chamber Ensembles**

The status of chamber music in the history of Western music is extremely high. Not only has it been revered by the aristocracy in its earliest days starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but also has achieved an important place in Western art music performance and study. Chamber music is a form of classical music that is composed for a group of 3-9 players and is not conducted. It represents a kind of friendly and harmonious social relationship and emphasizes empathy and exchanges among musicians. It is characterized by equality and intimacy. Each instrument in a chamber ensemble is an important part of the entire work, and since there is no conductor to organize them, it is up to the players to formulate their interpretations together. Everyone is an indispensable pillar in this music building, and each player typically shares important melodic and accompanying material. Chamber music fully presents the breadth and depth of artistic and musical communication among the players. There are several types of chamber groups with piano with the most typical being the piano trio, quartet, and quintet. Many chamber works with piano require advanced technique, and some works can be quite virtuosic.

The most important issue in chamber music performance is to develop a unified interpretation. The more people in the group, the more challenging this can become. Pianists must be flexible and cooperative and use good communication skills to help balance the group. Since the pianist has the full score and can see all the players' parts, the pianist is in a unique position to offer guidance and support. It is also important that all the players contribute their

ideas. Chamber music is conversational, and all the players should know when their musical material is featured and when it is accompaniment. All the players must agree on articulation, phrase shape, and other musical markings.

Along with balance and sound, an issue for the pianist in chamber music collaboration (as well as with singers or other instrumentalists) is the clarity of the musical line and pedal control. Heasook Rhee mentioned in her book *The Art of Instrumental Accompanying*: “Using pedal with clear awareness and intention is just as essential for pianists as it is for a string player or a vocalist to learn how to handle vibratos properly.....Perhaps the most regrettable use of this pedal occurs when pianists use it heavily to cover up their lack of preparation and insecure technique.”<sup>38</sup> The pianist uses the damper pedal to maintain the unity of musical lines, to add color, and to enhance the sound. The damper pedal can produce a colorful sound quality and rich overtones which can blend the piano with other string or winds instruments; however, the use of the pedal must be strict and restrained, so as to produce appropriate clean, round, clear, and exquisite sounds. Blurry, unclean pedaling can have a particularly bad effect on chamber music, where the textures can be thick and diverse, and the clarity of the lines must be maintained.

### **Working with Orchestra**

The pianist who plays within the orchestra requires a superb technique as mentioned previously. While the role of the collaborative pianist in the orchestra is different from that of the solo pianist playing a concerto with an orchestra, they still need a similar technical and musical

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<sup>38</sup> Rhee, Heasook. *The Art of Instrumental Accompanying: A Practical Guide for the Collaborative Pianist*. Carl Fischer, 2012:129-131

command in addition to some special skills. The piano parts in some orchestral works such as Camille Saint-Saëns's Symphony No. 3 in C minor, Op. 78, or Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird* are not as a solo instrument but belong often to the percussion category in the orchestra or simply as the piano providing virtuosic effects.

The most important skill for the collaborative pianist playing in the orchestra is to be completely prepared to follow the conductor. This is typically not easy for most pianists to do, who are used to being in charge of their own musical decisions. However, as a member of the orchestra, the collaborative pianist should do all that the conductor requires musically and be able to easily adapt to the conductor's gestures. Along with following the conductor, the pianist must sense the exact moment the sound has to be made. There is an art to matching when the note begins when playing with instruments and particularly in an orchestra, and the pianist must be a keen listener with quick reflexes to align with the conductor and the group.

Secondly, the pianist needs a particular confidence to play the piano part in the orchestra. Although the piano parts in some symphonic works are not very long, the technique required can be no less demanding than a solo part. In addition, the pianist needs strong rhythm and accuracy in counting rests, which can be long passages. There are many times, as one of the parts in the orchestra, that the rests can be much longer than the actual playing. Patient and careful counting is very important as well as listening for cues. Also, the pianist is sometimes required to play the celesta, another member of the keyboard family, and quickly move between the two instruments.

The collaboration between the pianist and the orchestra is rarely included in this field of discussion, but it is a rewarding and indispensable part of collaborative performance. It provides the pianist an opportunity to experience a great body of work, to perform with often outstanding musicians, and use a unique set of skills.

## Working with Other Pianists

There is a large body of works for four hands at one piano and at two pianos as well as for piano ensembles of even larger number. Despite their homogeneous tone quality, these types of collaborative works can offer a wide range of expression, complex textures, and rich sounds that reflect the beauty of the instrument. Pianists working together can be some of the most enjoyable collaborations that also present unique challenges for achieving proper sound, balance, and interpretation.

The great works for piano four hand are very similar to string quartet playing. The right and left hand of the *primo* can be considered the first and second violins, with the right and left of the *secondo*, the viola and cello. In duet repertoire, pianists should pay particular attention to the registration and to emphasize the melody and often the extreme registers of the piano.

In piano four hands the person who plays the *secondo* usually is responsible for the pedals, which is its own art form. The *secondo* must be mindful of pedal issues because the *secondo* player is pedaling for the *primo* part as well. Experimentation with the full range of the pedal is most important especially in the later romantic repertoire. Knowing where one should use an entire pedal or where a half pedal or quarter pedal would be more appropriate is an important part of the interpretation.

It is also necessary to make adjustments in hand positions as fingers often collide or share the same notes. Pianists can remedy this by playing farther back on the key (near the fallboard) or more on the edge or doing quick exchanges of the notes.

If piano duets are similar to string quartets, the works for two pianos are very similar to having two orchestras at the players' disposal. Two pianos have an extraordinarily broad range of

sound. Balance and pedaling are again some of the most important issues, with two-piano playing often requiring less pedaling by both players for clarity. The position of the two pianos also poses some challenges, with the pianos in the typical end-to-end stage placement. The distance of the two players requires clear cues and careful listening.

In both piano duets and duos, the pianists should be careful to use the same fingerings for similar passages which makes it easier to match articulation and phrasing.

## CHAPTER IV

### SELECTED WORKS FOR PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

This chapter offers repertoire as examples for the piano teacher and student to focus on selected collaborative skills.

#### **1. “Der Neugierige” from *Die Schöne Müllerin* by Franz Schubert**

In the analysis of the collaborative skills of this vocal work, the pianist must first understand the lyrics to master Schubert’s style, gain insight into his treatment of the form, and realize how the accompaniment reflects the text.

“Der Neugierige” (“The Curious One”) is the sixth song in Schubert's cycle *Die Schöne Müllerin*, Op.25. The cycle tells a story that begins positively but ends in sadness. A man wanders happily in the countryside. He walks along a stream to a mill and is hired to work there. The man falls in love with the beautiful daughter of the mill owner. He tries to impress her, but her reaction is vague. In the end, the man is tormented with feelings of unrequited love. Although the last song does not indicate whether the man did commit suicide, it is a sad lullaby of the brook which gives that impression.

“Der Neugierige” describes the mill worker thinking about the girl and talking to the brook. He constantly asks the brook if the girl likes him or not. This song is very delicate as Schubert portrays the shyness, infatuation, sensitivity, and insecurity of the mill worker. The lyrics by Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827) are as follows:

Ich frage keine Blume,  
 Ich frage keinen Stern,  
 Sie können mir alle nicht sagen,  
 Was ich erfür' so gern.  
 Ich bin ja auch kein Gärtner,  
 Die Sterne stehn zu hoch;  
 Mein Bächlein will ich fragen,  
 Ob mich mein Herz belog.  
 O Bächlein meiner Liebe,  
 Wie bist du heut' so stumm!  
 Will ja nur Eines wissen,  
 Ein Wörtchen um und um.  
 Ja, heisst das eine Wörtchen,  
 Das andre heisset Nein,  
 Die beiden Wörtchen schliessen  
 Die ganze Welt mir ein.  
 O Bächlein meiner Liebe,  
 Was bist du wunderlich!  
 Will's ja nicht weiter sagen,  
 Sag', Bächlein, liebt sie mich?

I ask no flower,  
 I ask no star,  
 None of them can tell me  
 What I eagerly want to know.  
 I am surely not a gardener.  
 the stars stand too high.  
 My brooklet will I ask.  
 Whether my heart I lied to me.  
 O brooklet of my love,  
 Why are you so quiet today?  
 I want to know just one thing,  
 One little word again and again.  
 The one little word is "Yes",  
 the other is "No".  
 Make up the entire world to me.  
 O stream of my love,  
 Why are you so strange?  
 I'll surely not repeat it.  
 Tell me, o brooklet, does she love me?<sup>39</sup>

The form of "Der Neugierige" is sectional with an introduction and postlude:

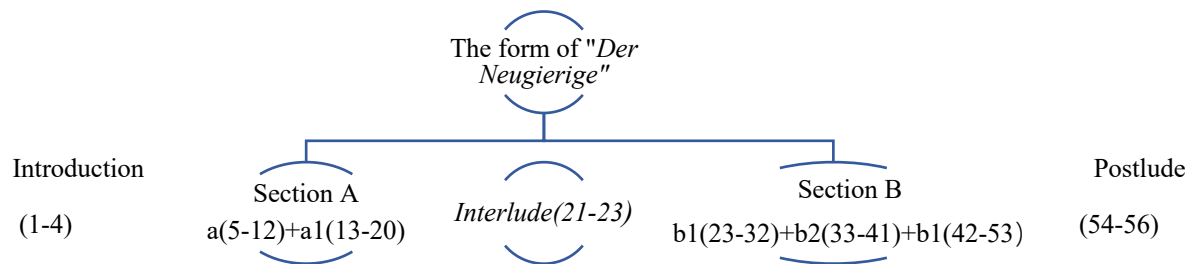


Figure 4.1. Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin*, The structure of "Der Neugierige"

<sup>39</sup> "Ich frage keine Blume." Translation by Emily Ezust, accessed March 4, 2023, [https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get\\_text.html?TextId=11876](https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=11876).



The introduction of starts *Langsam* (slowly) with a simple “questioning” melody. Here, the pianist should create a musical atmosphere for the singer, so that the singer can successfully enter the role of the protagonist.

**6.**  
**Der Neugierige.**

*Langsam.*

Figure 4.2. “Der Neugierige” mm. 1-5

This engrossing beginning organized by several simple notes and silences at once paints a vivid picture of the preoccupied miller. Therefore, the pianist must imagine the scene and pay attention to control the volume and character of the music. The melody unfolds at a slow speed, creating a calm mood. The fragmented eighth notes in the piano echo the uncertainty of the miller as no one has the answer for him about his beloved.

Figure 4.3. “Der Neugierige” mm. 6-16

Then, in section B found in Figure 3, the accompaniment texture in the right hand changes to broken chords depicting the gently running brook. This requires an extremely soft touch and an even legato in the piano to set off the beautiful vocal line. The left hand in measures 28-30 provides a corresponding melody.

Figure 4.4. “Der Neugierige, mm. 23-30

In the second part of Section B, the accompaniment texture is replaced with blocked chords that also double the vocal melody. Under the circumstances, the player cannot play this paragraph as loud as a piano solo. The pianist must give support for the singer, gently emphasizing the bass of the new texture. The fullness of the texture reinforces the important question of the miller as he says the answer will be the “entire world” for him.

Figure 4.5. “Der Neugierige”, mm. 35-38

In a sense the piano part throughout the song has maintained a certain neutrality as it depicts the brook with the miller singing to it. The song ends with a postlude in the piano which the miller takes to be the answer “yes, she loves me” from the brook.

“Der Neugierige” is a good example of the required knowledge needed for a collaborative pianist to effectively work with a singer and interpret a song. The piano accompaniment should provide support for the singer, indicate the direction of music, and support the singer’s interpretation. The pianist sets the ambience of the song and in many cases the psychological activity of the protagonist through the volume, rhythm, dynamics, texture, and tone color of the piano. An excellent collaborative pianist must know when to change the role and the moods. Sometimes the pianist has the dominant melody and sometimes is in a secondary role. The worst interpretation may be that the two collaborators ignore the details of the music and the text, or each compete for leading roles to show themselves in terms of volume and expression. That kind of collaboration will not be able to get the essence of music. Using analysis such as the ideas mentioned above will help to create an effective collaboration, one destined to enter the audience’s heart.

## **2. Beethoven’s Sonata for Piano and Violin, Op 12, No. 1**

This sonata for piano and violin was written in 1798 and dedicated to Antonio Salieri (1750-1825). It contains three movements: Allegro con brio; Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto; and Rondo: Allegro. This work was created by Beethoven during his studies with Haydn, so its style is highly similar to his teacher, belonging to the typical duo sonata of the Viennese classical school with an elegant and sophisticated style.



Figure 4.6. Beethoven's Sonata in D major, Op.12, No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 1-6

The piano and violin in the first theme must be performed precisely together. Firstly, the violinist needs to give the pianist a clear cue at the beginning which includes the tempo and emotion to ensure the two players accurately perform together. Secondly, the pianist must be careful not to overpower the violin, particularly since the theme of the violin is doubled in the piano. Of particular concern also is the articulation of the three-note pattern that both players match in the legato and release.

The violin and piano have a very interesting dialogue beginning in measure 33 as they exchange descending scales. When the melodic line shifts back and forth between violinist and pianist, the exchange should be a seamless alternation, reflecting the sense of symmetry and rhythm in the musical material:



Figure 4.7. Beethoven's Sonata in D major, Op.12, No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, mm. 33-40

In the second movement of this sonata, Beethoven uses an interesting texture - one that is found throughout the collaborative repertoire in general. The right hand plays broken chords which help to provide a harmonic foundation and provide rhythmic interest. The octaves in the left hand provide a counterpoint for the melody in the violin. This requires that the pianist highlight this colorful registration and texture by voicing the fifth finger of the left hand in contrast to the treble range and thereby draw the outline of the contrapuntal line of the bass part.



Figure 4.8. Beethoven's Sonata in D major, Op.12, No. 1, Var.1of 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 9-13

Also in the second movement is a dazzling variation with continuous patterns. Both the pianist and the violinist must play lightly and precisely together with a variety of articulations that Beethoven has included. This requires careful listening by both players and a very slight stress on each beat by both players to help align the parts.



Figure 4.9. Beethoven's Sonata in D major, Op.12, No.1, Var. 2 of 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, mm. 49-56

The third movement of this sonata by Beethoven is a Rondo in a 6/8 meter. In measures 9-17 the piano has a typical repeated-chord accompaniment. This type of repeated pattern is also found throughout the collaborative repertoire. The pianist must be sensitive to the release of the left hand and the gradations of sound in the repeated chords, playing the second chord of groups of two slightly lighter and letting the longer groups of five chords diminish slightly. Otherwise, this type of accompanying pattern can easily sound mechanical and not in the musical character of the piece.



Figure 4.10. Beethoven's Sonata in D major, Op.12, No. 1, 3rd movement, mm. 6-12

### **3. Fantaisie for Flute and Piano, Op.79 by Gabriel Fauré**

Fantaisie, Op.79 for flute and piano was composed by Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) in 1898. It was originally written for a flute competition at the Paris Conservatoire and dedicated to Paul Taffanel (1844-1908) the father of the modern French school of flute playing. This elegant solo has beautiful melodic lines and is impressionistic in style.

In measures 31-35, Fauré writes a long ascending chromatic scale followed by trills and flourishes for the flute. The piano part looks deceptively simple, yet many flutists have trouble with their collaborative pianists in passages such as this. The pianist must be flexible with the accompaniment, aligning with the flutist who will need time to breathe and shape this virtuosic passage:

The image shows a musical score for Fauré's Fantaisie, Op. 79, measures 31-35. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a flute part with rapid sixteenth-note passages and a piano accompaniment with chords and a simple bass line. Measures 33-35 include trills and dynamic markings (f and mf).

Figure 4.11. Fauré's Fantaisie, Op.79, mm. 31-35

In measures 113 through 116, the sixteenth notes in the flute and piano parts must be aligned together. The pianist should also put a slight accent on the downbeat of each measure to help with the precision as well as follow the diminuendo by the flute in measure 116:

The image shows a musical score for Fauré's Fantaisie, Op. 79, measures 113-116. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a flute part with sixteenth-note passages and a piano accompaniment with chords and a simple bass line. Measure 113 starts with a piano (p) dynamic marking.

Figure 4.12. Fauré's Fantaisie, Op.79, mm. 113-116

The piano part in measures 117 to 125 is graceful and elegant, with Fauré changing the texture to arpeggiated figures. The pianist must be graceful in the phrasing and release the eighth



note in the right hand softly and gently. In terms of touch, the pianist should also listen closely to the nuance and phrasing of the flute, keeping a quieter dynamic than the flute as indicated:

Figure 4.13. Fauré's Fantaisie, Op.79, mm. 117-127

Fauré expands the texture further in measures 134 through 142, as the piano has the lyrical melody in the right hand, with a sustained lower counterpoint in the quarter notes of the left hand combined with the ascending motives in the flute. Thus, the pianist should actively make the most of these layers in the writing and register changes as the phrase moves forward:

Figure 4.14. Fauré's Fantaisie, Op.79, mm. 134-143

#### **4. Concerto in Eb Major for Trumpet by Johann Nepomuk Hummel**

The Concerto in Eb Major by Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) is one of the most popular brass works in the repertoire. As an orchestral reduction, the piano part is somewhat different with special considerations for the collaborative pianist.

The first movement of Hummel's trumpet concerto (*Allegro con spirito*) contains much music for the orchestra. For practical applications, the long opening orchestral section is not suitable for all performances such as auditions or master classes. The pianist should consider the specific place based on the harmonic logic of the music to help the trumpet enter easily. It is best to cut part of the introduction keeping seven measures (from measure 60-66) as a brief

introduction. Because the continuous tonic and dominant chords give a sense of stability for tonality, and the preparation of dominant chord provide a proper entrance.

The image displays a musical score for measures 59 through 71 of Hummel's Trumpet Concerto in Eb Major, 1st movement. The score is written for piano and trumpet. It is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 59-61) features a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern in the bass and chords in the treble, marked with *sf* (sforzando). The second system (measures 62-65) shows the piano accompaniment continuing with a similar pattern, while the trumpet part enters with a melodic line marked *p* (piano). The third system (measures 66-71) features a trumpet solo marked *Solo* and *mf < f* (mezzo-forte to forte), with the piano accompaniment providing harmonic support, marked with *f* (forte).

Figure 4.15. Hummel's Trumpet Concerto in Eb Major, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt, mm. 59-71

In measures 72-76, Hummel uses a light chordal texture in the orchestra. These group of chords should be played staccato with slight diminuendos to avoid sounding mechanical and keep the rhythmic character. The dynamic of *piano* should be softer than the trumpet line.

Figure 4.16. Hummel's Trumpet Concerto in Eb Major, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm.72-76

The principles of the sound production for the piano and trumpet are completely different. Therefore, pianists need to understand some of the limitations of the trumpet. For example, as the trumpeter plays the long notes in bars 136 through 141 in Figure 15 the pianist should be considerate about the breathing and push the accompaniment forward as needed for the soloist:

Figure 4.17. Hummel's Trumpet Concerto in Eb Major, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 135-143

Movement 3 has the fastest tempo in the concerto. Although the composer marks the tempo Allegro with some editions suggesting a metronome speed of 140 for the quarter note, the

actual performance tempo can be much faster at 168-178. In this kind of movement, the pianist needs to respond to discuss the reasonable speed with the trumpeter and find out what the trumpeter needs from the pianist to hold the tempo.

A final note about playing orchestral reductions: the pianist has freedom to reduce the orchestral part even more as needed while still retaining the necessary melodic and accompanying material. Depending on the pianist's technique and the tempo, an ornament such as the ones in the interlude of bars 93-98 may be omitted:



Figure 4.18.. Hummel's Trumpet Concerto in Eb Major, 3<sup>rd</sup> mvmt., mm. 93-98

### **5. Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor ("Dumky") by Antonin Dvořák**

As the father of Czech classical music, Antonín Dvořák's works often contain a distinctive ethnic style and inspiration. His Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor, Op. 90, B. 166 (also called "Dumky") is one of the best-known works in the history of chamber music. Dvořák's Dumky trio deviates from the traditional structures in the length and number of movements and overall form. The trio is filled with Slavic influence in its drama, melodies, and character.

The introduction of the Dumky piano trio consists of cello and piano. From the start, the pianist needs to be able to read tenor clef for the cello part. This introduction poses several ensemble issues with the strong dynamic (not covering the cello) and also aligning the rolled

chords in the piano with the cello part. The most feasible way is to combine the highest notes of the left-hand thumb in the piano part with cello quarter notes according to the cueing of the cello. In measure six, although the composer did not mark a diminuendo and ritard, from the dynamic and articulation of the phrase, it should slow down slightly to leave space for the solo:

Figure 4.19. Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 1- 6

Measures 35 to 40 have one of the most enjoyable motives in the work that the violin, cello, and piano play simultaneously. The pianist must pay special attention to the balance here, with the close registration for all the instruments and the dynamic changes and articulation. The piano part is challenging, but the pianist must still concentrate on hearing the sound of the violin and the cello clearly. The ensemble should make the phrase lively and rhythmically secure:

Allegro quasi doppio movimento

rit. *p* *fp*

*pp rit.* *vivace fz* *ffz*

Allegro quasi doppio movimento

*p* *ritard.* *p leggiero* *cresc.* *fz*

*dimin.* *p* *fz* *fz* *cresc.*

10093

Figure 4.20. Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 35-40

In the next section, the composer marks *fortissimo* for each part. However, these three *ff*'s are not the same volume. The piano part consists of an octave bass line in the left hand and full chords in right hand. Because of the low register, the piano sounds much louder than the other instruments. As a result, the piano should control the volume as *f*, and importantly let the bass line in the left hand guide the whole phrase. This not only makes the melody full of rhythmic energy, but also keeps the tempo steady:

Figure 4.21. Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 45-57

Dvořák uses some particularly artistic piano writing in measures 78 to 87. The pianist must be sensitive to the touch and effects that Dvořák is notating. In measure 84, the left hand of the piano part has a tremolo effect, as if it is sparkling starlight. The right hand has the legato and graceful melody imitating the violin. Pianists should be creative using the *una corda* and damper pedals. Sensitive pedaling is of particular importance in chamber music.



Figure 4.22. Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 78-87

A similar balance issue occurs beginning in measure 205 as earlier in the work. The *furioso* marking and *fortissimo* dynamics in all three parts still require the pianist to play with less volume in order to allow the violin and cello to be heard in this characteristically Slavic motive. The Italian term *furioso* means to play with great force or vigor. In measure 213, the cello has *pizzicato*. Therefore, the pianist should not overwhelm the volume of the strings. Listening to each other is crucial to blend all the instruments together.

The image shows a page of musical notation for Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4, 1st movement, measures 203-212. The score is in 3/4 time and D major. It features a piano part with a prominent triplet in the right hand and a violin part with a 'ff furioso' section highlighted in a red box. Dynamics include f, ff, fz, p, and pizz. The tempo is marked 'f' and 'ff furioso'.

Figure 4.23. Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 4, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 203-212

### 6. Piano part from *The Firebird* by Igor Stravinsky

*The Firebird* is a ballet and orchestral concert work by the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) written in 1910. It is based on an old Russian folk tale: Prince Ivan defeats the evil Koschei with the help of the Firebird, a magical bird, and finally rescues the princess and leads a happy life. This work is famous for its compound meters, complex rhythms, dazzling texture, and wonderful orchestration. In the 1919 version for orchestra, Stravinsky added the piano.

The introduction unfolds slowly amid the broken arpeggios of the low strings and the long notes in the brass. It depicts the enchanted atmosphere; the ogres and monsters of all kinds belong to evil Koschei. When the timpani play, the celesta plays a series of ethereal broken arpeggios with some mysterious sounds. It is very common for the same person to play both the piano and celesta. In this section, counting the rests and watching the conductor are most important for the professional pianist.

Introduction

The musical score is titled "Introduction" and is in 12/8 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 108. The score is divided into three systems. The first system covers measures 1-13, with piano accompaniment in the left hand and rests in the right hand. The second system covers measures 14-15, featuring a melodic line for Oboe 1 (Ob.1) in the right hand and piano accompaniment in the left hand. The third system covers measures 18-21, with piano accompaniment in the left hand and celesta accompaniment in the right hand. The celesta part begins at measure 21 with the instruction "leggeriss. p".

Figure 4.24. Stravinsky's The Introduction of *The Firebird*, mm. 1-23

In the second movement, *Variation de l'Oiseau de feu*, Stravinsky requires the pianist to play *glissandi* on the white keys. The ensemble issue is aligning the string sound to the glissando

in the right hand and the triplets in the left hand. The pianist must play confidently and with special attention to the conductor, reading every gesture and expression.

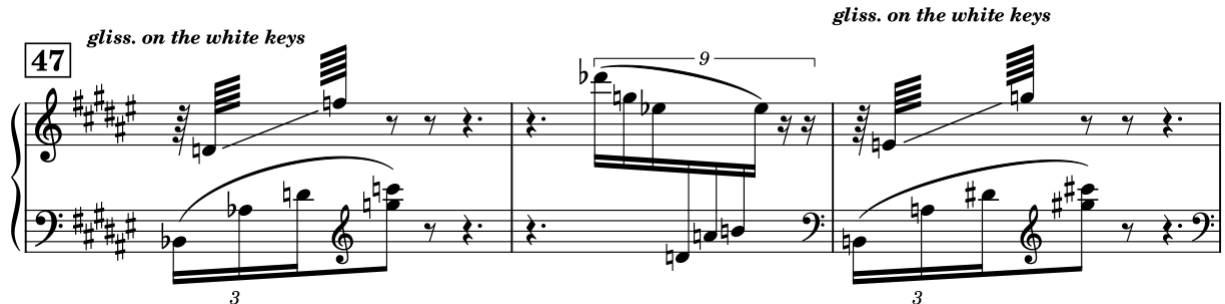


Figure 4.25. Stravinsky's *Variation de l'Oiseau de feu*, mm. 47-49

The texture in Figure 24 is made up of rapid broken arpeggios combined with wind instruments. Stravinsky emphasizes the top notes, either with a wedge staccato or an accent. The pianist must do these important articulations and dynamics. According to Stravinsky: “all that is magical or mysterious, marvelous or supernatural, is characterized in the music by what may be termed *Leit-harmony*.... In contrast with this magical, chromatic music, the mortal element (the prince and the princesses) is allied with characteristically Russian music of a diatonic type.”<sup>40</sup> The performance by the pianist calls for great articulation and awareness to reflect the unique sound effect used by Stravinsky.

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<sup>40</sup> McFarland, Mark. "Leit-harmony", or Stravinsky's Musical Characterization in "The Firebird." *International Journal of Musicology* (1994): 205

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system, starting at measure 53, features a complex melodic line in the right hand with a forte (f) dynamic marking and a multi-measure rest of 5 measures in the left hand. The second system, starting at measure 56, continues with similar complexity, including an 8va-1 marking and a forte (f) dynamic marking. The notation includes various articulations like accents and slurs, and rests of 7 and 8 measures.

Figure 4.26. Stravinsky's *Variation de l'Oiseau de feu*, mm. 53-58

*Danse infernale du roi Kastcheït* is the most splendid part of *The Firebird*. The piano part here uses strong sound for each downbeat chord played with the percussion group. In this case, the pianist needs to maintain continuous passion without relaxing in the rests. The pianist should treat the articulation of this movement as a percussive touch. This music requires the pianist to have extremely high attention, energy and rhythmic feeling.

Ronde des princesses - tacet

Danse infernale du roi Kastcheït

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 168. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (sff, sf, ff), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like 'très court e fort'. Measure numbers 9, 11, 19, 21, 27, 30, 35, 39, and 47 are boxed. Rehearsal marks are placed above the staff, and measure ranges are placed below the staff. The score concludes with a key signature change to one flat (F) and a time signature change to 2/4.

Figure 4.27. Stravinsky's *Danse infernale du roi Kastcheït*, mm. 1-49

## 7. Barcarolle from Suite No. 1 by Sergei Rachmaninoff

Sergei Rachmaninoff's Suite No.1 is a well-known work for two pianos. Composed in 1893, it is dedicated to Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky(1840-1893). The Suite contains four movements, each inspired by a different poem. The first movement, Barcarolle, reflects a poem by Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841):

At dusk the chill wave laps gently  
Beneath the gondola's slow oar  
That song again and again, the twang of the guitar,  
In the distance the old barcarolle was heard,  
now melancholy, now happy...  
The gondola glides through the water, and time glides over the surge of love.  
The water will grow smooth again and passion will rise no more.<sup>41</sup>

Piano I begins with ascending arpeggios depicting the waves. Piano II plays a sorrowful melody. The two players should create a tranquil atmosphere both imagining the song of the gondolier. The two pianists must listen to each other and play as one.

The image shows the beginning of the Barcarolle from Suite No. 1 by Sergei Rachmaninoff, for two pianos. The score is in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major, and marked 'Allegretto.' Piano I starts with ascending arpeggios (pp) and Piano II plays a sorrowful melody (p).

<sup>41</sup> Suite No. 1 (Rachmaninoff), accessed by March 20, 2023 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suite\\_No.\\_1\\_\(Rachmaninoff\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suite_No._1_(Rachmaninoff))



Figure 4.28. Rachmaninoff's Suite No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 1-10

The texture of the first movement changes to triplet patterns in measures 67-74.

Rachmaninoff creates a beautiful effect with the two pianos in the upper registers. It requires both performers to have even fingers and control. In order to align all the hands, pianists should put a slight emphasis on each large beat and practice together right hands alone and left hands alone. Between these repeated patterns, there is a technique of crossing hands for two notes for both the first and second piano in measure 76. The pianists should highlight these two notes. Pianists will also need to be very careful with the pedaling and use of the soft pedals. They must collaborate on all aspects of articulation, sound, rhythm, dynamics, and mood and use the same fingering for similar passages in order to more easily match phrasing.



*8va*

*poco a poco cre- - scen- - - - -*

*8va*

*do sf di- - - - - mi - - - - -*

*- nu - - - - - en - - - - - do - - - - - pp*

Figure 4.29. Rachmaninoff's Suite No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 67-77

Measures 160-165 contain some of the most difficult passages of the first movement. It is important to find the right speed to accurately play this passagework. If the tempo is too slow, the main theme of the second piano seems too drawn out. However, if the tempo is too fast, it may be impossible for the first pianist to play all the notes. The pianists must collaborate together, learn from each other, and find a suitable interpretation and tempo.

The image displays a musical score for Rachmaninoff's Suite No. 1, 1st movement, measures 165-170. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The right-hand part (treble clef) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a complex melodic line with a sixteenth-note triplet and a sixteenth-note sextuplet. The left-hand part (bass clef) features a triplet of eighth notes and a series of triplets of eighth notes. The second system begins at measure 24 and shows a change in the right-hand part, with a triplet of eighth notes and a triplet of sixteenth notes. The left-hand part continues with triplets of eighth notes. The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, dynamics, and articulation marks.

Figure 4.30. Rachmaninoff's Suite No. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> mvmt., mm. 165-170

## Conclusion

Gerald Moore once said: “The ensemble pianist or the accompanist or the man ‘at the piano’—to be first rate at his job does not need to be a superman. He does need to be a good pianist, he does need sensitive ears, and he does need a sensitive musical brain. Strangely enough, too, he does need in his chemical makeup, that repository of all human feeling, that source of poetry, fire, and romance, namely, a heart.”<sup>42</sup>

There are many skills that an excellent collaborative pianist must have: as Gerald Moore said, a skilled pianist, but not an omnipotent one, because the field of collaborative piano is too wide. An excellent chamber musician can be respected as a collaborative pianist, and an outstanding vocal accompanist can also be called a collaborative expert; nor is it that the pianist participating in an ensemble is more advanced than a pianist accompanying a vocalist. In all these cases, the collaborative pianist needs to be a musician. In other words, the pianist should know how to listen, find a suitable tempo, play accurately and sensitively, and keep a steady pulse. The pianist also needs to have a musical brain that means knowing music so well that one can be flexible enough to deal with a variety of genres and styles and personalities.

After the technical issues are solved, the pianist accumulates a certain amount of repertoire and performing experience. The most effective and moving performances are not only based on superb skills, but also deeper things. Is it as Moore said? After developing a technique, the deeper issues pianists want to pursue are at their source in human emotions and profound communication through music. For the pianist who wants to collaborate, this happens most enthusiastically with other musicians. What is the chemistry that happens in a collaborative performance?

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<sup>42</sup> Moore, Gerald. *Am I Too Loud? Memoirs of an Accompanist*. (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962), 101.

As an emerging discipline, the subject of collaborative piano is constantly being explored in the international academic field. To some extent, there are still unknown problems or issues to be solved. It is hoped that this research paper helps pianists become more aware of the details and possibilities of collaborations, so that teachers and students can more effectively explore this artistic discipline and achieve the skills, joys, and rewards of musical collaboration. It is hoped also that subsequent scholars and educators will be more interested in the professional collaborative piano major and continue to explore and cultivate collaborative skills in piano students.

## Appendix

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